

# **TOWN OF SOUTHAMPTON COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PROJECT PLAN**

## **Part I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. HISTORY**

Southampton is endowed with many natural blessings; a countrified area with abundant forests, wetlands, farmlands and historic hamlets bordered by beautiful sandy beaches, a magnificent ocean and sparkling bays. The Town also enjoys clean air, clean water, plentiful fisheries and a wealth of open space. These, in addition to its rich maritime, native American and colonial heritage, as well as its warm and entrepreneurial people, place Southampton as one of the top places to live and visit in the world.

Conscious of the value of its farmland, water, air, natural resources and cultural heritage, Southampton has always sought to protect open space and preserve community character. Consequently, for the past thirty years, the Town has enacted a wide range of plans and programs for preserving land and water, resulting in a regional network of parks, beaches, preserves, wildlife sanctuaries, agricultural reserves, trails, and historic sites. These plans, however, have never fully realized the Town's goal of preserving the full array of extraordinary natural diversity and unique quality of life, which sets Southampton apart from other towns.

On June 22, 1998, in a Southampton farm field, Governor George E. Pataki signed state legislation amending both town and state tax laws to enable the five towns within the Peconic Bay region to establish, through local referendums, Community Preservation Funds supported by revenues from a 2% real estate transfer tax. This historic legislation has since enabled the Town of Southampton to aggressively pursue its long-standing farmland and open space protection goals through the voluntary acquisition of land and development rights in targeted areas. In November of 2002, the voters of the Town of Southampton overwhelmingly approved a ten-year extension of the tax to the year 2010. The additional ten years will allow the Town to borrow more money now while critical land is still available and before further real estate price increases.

The legislative findings and intent supporting the creation of the Community Preservation Funds recognized that local governments located in the Peconic Bay region of Suffolk County, had made a substantial commitment of public funds towards the protection and preservation of farmland, open space, significant natural areas, historic places and for the provision of park and recreation opportunities. Prior to the enactment of the Community Preservation Fund, from 1980 to 1998, the five towns of the Peconic Bay region had expended or authorized over 50 million dollars in public finds to protect these facets collectively referred to as community character.

The commitment of the Town of Southampton towards community character is unique and unmatched in both New York State and across the country since the inception of the Community Preservation Fund. This success is widely attributed to the adoption and

implementation of the Community Preservation Project Plan. The Project Plan serves several functions in carrying out the goals of the Community Preservation Fund, most important of which is the listing of projects and parcels for which the Fund can be used.

The Town Board adopted the initial Project Plan, entitled "1998-2001 Town of Southampton Community Preservation Project Plan," on August 25, 1998 and the first update entitled "2001-2003 Town of Southampton Community Preservation Project Plan" was adopted on October 19, 2001. This Project Plan consisted of eight (8) Target Areas and identified some 28,668 acres in the Town of Southampton as the highest priority for preservation. The eight Target Areas and their respective acreage for preservation under the Project Plans were as follows:

<u>No.</u>	<u>Target Area</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
1	Agricultural Lands.....	3,561
2	Open Space/Greenbelt Areas.....	4,606
3	Central Pine Barrens Plan – Core Preservation Area.....	18,753
4	Central Pine Barrens Plan – Critical Resource Area.....	–
5	Wetlands.....	569
6	Trails.....	11
7	Village & Hamlet Greens, Parks, Recreation & Open Space.....	1,168
8	Historic Places	
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>28,668</b>

As of December 2004, over 1,944 acres of land have been preserved under the "2001-2003 Community Preservation Project Plan" with an additional 300 acres in contract. The preserved acreage in each Target Area is as follows:

<u>No.</u>	<u>Target Area</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
1	Agricultural Lands.....	530.20
2	Open Space/Greenbelt Areas.....	1085.98
3	Central Pine Barrens Plan – Core Preservation Area.....	11.28
4	Central Pine Barrens Plan – Critical Resource Area.....	0.00
5	Wetlands.....	86.93
6	Trails.....	58.00
7	Village & Hamlet Greens, Parks, Recreation & Open Space.....	172.06
8	Historic Places.....	0.00
<b>TOTALS....</b>		<b>1,944.45</b>

## **B. PURPOSE**

One of the key elements supporting the adoption and implementation of the Town of Southampton Community Preservation Fund is the Community Preservation Project Plan. As stated earlier, the initial Project Plan, entitled "1998-2001 Town of Southampton Community Preservation Project Plan," was adopted by the Town Board on August 25, 1998.

Subsequently, the Town Board adopted the “2001-2003 Town of Southampton Community Preservation Project Plan” on October 19, 2001.

As permitted by statute, the Project Plan, once adopted by the Town Board, can only be updated "not less than five years, but in no event until three years after the adoption of the original Plan."

The purpose of this document, entitled “Community Preservation Project Plan” will serve to build upon the 1998-2001 Project Plan and the 2001-2003 Project Plan, as well as new initiatives, including but not limited to, regulatory techniques, and subdivision, zoning and wetland protection laws, as well as a multitude of private conservation strategies that have been adopted by the Town.

The Project Plan, as mandated by the enabling legislation of the state legislature, must satisfy the following conditions:

1. The Plan shall list every project which the Town plans to undertake pursuant to the Community Preservation Fund.
2. The Plan shall include every parcel which is necessary to be acquired in the Town in order to protect community character.
3. The Plan shall provide for a detailed evaluation of all available land use alternatives to protect community character, including but not limited to:
  - a. Fee simple acquisition
  - b. Zoning regulations, including density reduction, cluster development, and site plan and design requirements
  - c. Transfer of Development Rights
  - d. Purchase of Development Rights, and
  - e. Scenic and Conservation Easements
4. The Plan shall establish the priorities for preservation, and shall include the preservation of farmland as its highest priority.

The enabling legislation provides further guidance for establishing preservation priorities other than farmland. Specifically, the Project Plan’s focus may involve one or more of the following:

- (a) establishment of parks, nature preserves, or recreation areas
- (b) preservation of open space, including agricultural lands
- (c) preservation of lands of exceptional scenic value
- (d) preservation of fresh and saltwater marshes or other wetlands
- (e) preservation of aquifer recharge areas
- (f) preservation of undeveloped beach lands or shoreline
- (g) establishment of wildlife refuges for the purposes of maintaining native animal species diversity, including the protection of habitat essential to the recovery of rare, threatened or endangered species
- (h) preservation of pine barrens consisting of such biota as pitch pine, and scrub oak
- (i) preservation of unique or threatened ecological areas

- (j) preservation of rivers and river areas in a natural, free flowing condition
- (k) preservation of forested lands
- (l) preservation of public access to lands for public use including stream rights and waterways
- (m) preservation of historic places and properties listed on the New York state register of historic places and/or protected under a municipal historic preservation ordinance or law
- (n) undertaking any of the aforementioned in furtherance of the establishment of a greenbelt

## **C. SUMMARY**

The updated Project Plan is divided into the following key parts summarized as follows:

### Part II. Community Preservation Target Areas, Projects, Parcels and Priorities

A total of nine target areas have been identified and mapped as Figure 1 of Part II of the plan. These target areas are summarized as follows:

1. Unprotected prime Agricultural Land contained within the Agricultural Overlay District
2. Twenty-two Open Space and Greenbelt Areas defined by previously adopted open space plans and the draft Comprehensive Plan Update
3. The Core Area of the adopted Central Pine Barrens Plan
4. Ten Critical Resource Areas identified by the adopted Central Pine Barrens Plan
5. Critical fresh and tidal Wetlands
6. Significant opportunities to establish Trails
7. Significant parcels identified within an Aquifer Recharge Area to provide potable groundwater and to assure clean surface water
8. Significant parcels identified within Villages and hamlet centers to create traditional greens, parks, recreation opportunities and other forms of open space
9. Historic places and properties defined as Town Landmarks or listed on the national and state registers of historic places

All told, the updated Community Preservation Project Plan identifies **30,061.53<sup>1</sup>** acres as the highest priorities for preservation through the appropriate land-use alternatives noted. Following is a breakdown of that total by project area:

<u>No.</u>	<u>Target Area</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
1	Agricultural Lands.....	4,252.69
2	Open Space/Greenbelt Areas.....	6,446.35
3	Central Pine Barrens Plan – Core Preservation Area.....	12,461.22
4	Central Pine Barrens Plan – Critical Resource Area.....	511.60
5	Wetlands.....	2,229.17
6	Trails.....	1,637.09
7	Aquifer Recharge Areas.....	648.49
8	Village/Hamlet Green, Parks, Recreation/Open Space.....	1,873.32
9	Historic Places.....	1.6
<b>TOTAL.....</b>		<b>30,061.53</b>

Part II and Appendices A and B of the Project Plan also identify various categories of priority parcels and projects situated within the target areas based on a number of sources including: 1998-2001 and 2001-2003 Community Preservation Project Plans; recommendations from the draft Comprehensive Plan Update; the inventory of agricultural land resources completed as part of the first phase of the Town’s Farm and Farmland Preservation Strategy; priority recommendations from the Town’s Community Preservation Advisory Board; priority recommendations from the Town’s Agricultural Advisory Board; New York State Open Space Plan; recommendations from each of the villages; recommendations defined by various hamlet citizen groups during the comprehensive and related planning processes; recommendations from various local environmental groups; and recommendations defined through analyses completed by the Department of Land Management.

Together, the nine groups of target areas and the priority projects and parcels form a comprehensive system of open space and greenways that if preserved utilizing the Community Preservation Fund in combination with other land use alternatives will insure the short and long range protection of Southampton’s rural and resort environment, economy and community character.

Part II of the Project Plan also provides the following elements:

- An overview of Southampton’s open space and farmland planning efforts that are an essential component of the underlying basis for the plan
- An overview of past and current open space and farmland protection investments through expenditures by the Town, Suffolk County, New York State and federal sources

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that this acreage includes parcels that may meet the criteria for more than one Target Area. Therefore, the actual total number of acreage contained in the Project Plan is **27,648.60**.

- Methodology, definition, mapping and listing of target areas and priority parcels and projects

### Part III Summary and Evaluation of Land Use Alternatives to Protect Community Character

Part III of the Project Plan provides an identification and summary of Southampton's existing land use alternatives to protect community character and an evaluation of those existing land use alternatives in relation to the recommended target areas and underlying categories of priority parcels and projects.

The state enabling legislation indicates that the Project Plan's "evaluation of all available land use alternatives to protect community character" may include but not be limited to:

- (a) fee simple land acquisition;
- (b) zoning regulations;
- (c) transfer of development rights;
- (d) purchase of development rights; and
- (e) scenic and conservation easements.

The Project Plan identifies and evaluates eighteen (18) individual and classes of land use alternatives intended to protect community character as outlined by Table 2. The majority of the land use alternatives are identified by corresponding sections of the Town Code such as Section 292-11, Planned Residential Development (Residential Cluster). Other important alternatives are defined by classes such as fee simple acquisition or the purchase of development rights which may be accomplished through not only the Community Preservation Fund but also by the formation of partnerships with County, State and Federal funding programs as well as private financing strategies in order to leverage the greatest fiscal and public benefits.

The actual evaluation of available land use alternatives, as presented by Table 3, utilizes a matrix format that assigns and ranks the potential application of individual or class of land use alternatives in relation to each target area and the underlying categories of potential priority parcels and projects. A narrative summarizing the evaluation of land use alternatives by target area is also provided.

In summary, the following sections of the updated Town of Southampton's Community Preservation Project Plan have been completed to both further the goals and objectives of the initial 1998-2001 Project Plan and the 2001-2003 Project Plan and the Town's adopted and ongoing open space and farmland preservations plans and programs. The Project Plan will serve as an important guide that will enable the Town Board, the Community Preservation Division and the Community Preservation Fund Advisory Board to make recommendations concerning the acquisition of interests in real property to not only protect community character but to insure that Southampton's rural and resort environment and economy will be sustained.